

Concord-Alewife Rezoning Petition



Submitted to the City Council by the Planning Board
April 2005

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April 20, 2005

To the Honorable, the City Council,

Subject: Concord-Alewife Rezoning Petition

The Planning Board is pleased to submit for consideration the Concord-Alewife Rezoning Petition. This petition contains the zoning recommendations of the Concord-Alewife Planning Study, a multidisciplinary master plan for the mostly underutilized commercial and industrial area in northwest Cambridge.

Similar to the Eastern Cambridge Planning Study and subsequent rezoning process, the Concord-Alewife Planning Study expands upon the work of the Citywide Growth Management Initiative and resulting Citywide Rezoning, which was adopted by the City Council in 2001.

The Concord-Alewife area is approximately 180 acres and bounded by Concord Avenue, Alewife Reservation, Blanchard Road, and Danehy Park. The study area is made up of four sub-areas: the Cambridge Highlands, the Quadrangle, the Triangle, and Fresh Pond Shopping Center. Concord-Alewife remains the last large commercial/ industrial area of Cambridge with a significant amount of development potential, and more detailed planning was needed to better direct development the area is likely to see in the future.

The Concord-Alewife Study began in 2002 with the aim of creating a long range vision and plan for the area through a participatory process. The City Manager appointed a Concord-Alewife Study Committee, consisting of neighborhood residents, representatives of study area businesses, and property owners, to guide the study. The Study Committee worked closely with a team of consultants and City staff to address a variety of planning issues for Concord-Alewife such as: the appropriate mix of uses, including housing, commercial, and open space; access and traffic; the character of future development; and needed zoning changes to accomplish study goals. The work of the Study Committee was informed by public input, both at Study Committee meetings and at four public meetings held throughout the process.

The zoning is intended to accomplish the goals for the study area identified in the plan and to facilitate the transformation of Concord-Alewife into a vibrant mixed-use area. The following are principal elements of the proposed rezoning:

- Encourage a mix of uses throughout the area;
- Encourage housing creation, similar to Citywide rezoning;
- Create a framework for transit-oriented development near Alewife Station;
- Establish a base district with acceptable densities for as of right development. In general, the base zoning allows the existing development to remain conforming in use, and in most cases conforming in FAR;
- Establish overlay districts which, through use of a special permit process, permit additional FAR and height, while establishing guidelines for development consistent with study goals, including transportation mitigation, open space and stormwater improvements, enhanced urban design and public realm;

- As part of special permit review, identify key infrastructure elements and provide a vehicle for contributing to those elements;
- Permit Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) zoning to move density away from Cambridge Highlands and close to Alewife Station;
- In a largely paved area, increase permeability on individual parcels and areawide, by creating a permeability requirement and by proposing an area-wide stormwater retention basin/open space; and
- Encourage use of Low Impact Development to manage stormwater on-site in a sustainable, environmentally sensitive fashion.

The zoning recommendations are intended to help fulfill a vision for Concord-Alewife that emerged during the study process. The vision emphasized creating a people oriented sense of place; developing a neighborhood gathering-place for people who live, work, play, and shop in the area; overcoming barriers and creating much needed connections to achieve a walkable neighborhood; and enhancing the environment.

The Planning Board believes that this petition will help guide the transformation of Concord-Alewife and will achieve the vision and meet the goals developed during the planning study process.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Shaw" followed by a small circular stamp containing the number "17".

Barbara Shaw, Chair

Concord-Alewife Rezoning Petition
Submitted to the City Council by the Planning Board

Summary of Recommendations

AREA-WIDE ZONING CHANGES

Proposed zoning would create a two-tier zoning similar to ECaPS rezoning by establishing base zoning and, through a set of Overlay Districts, allowing higher FAR and height by special permit. Higher densities would be allowed closer to the T station while lower densities would be required near the Highlands (see attached Concept Plan). The general concepts are to:

- Create four base zoning districts (Office 1, Business A, a modified Industry B-2, and a new Office 2A district) with uses similar to those allowed under existing zoning but with FAR and height limits lower than existing zoning.
- Create six overlay districts that would, by special permit, allow greater height and FAR, generally to levels allowed under existing zoning.
- Use the special permit process to ensure consistency with the Concord-Alewife Plan, especially with respect to needed infrastructure.
- Increase open space requirements, and create permeability requirements and guidelines that encourage future development to respond to stormwater and open space objectives.
- Use FAR bonuses to encourage development of key infrastructure improvements such as roadway segments, significant open space and the creation of a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over the railroad tracks (see attached Priority and Additional Infrastructure Plans).
- Allow transfer of development rights to encourage denser development nearer transit access.

INFRASTRUCTURE TREATMENT

In order to fully realize the development potential of the Concord-Alewife area, several key infrastructure elements are recommended in the plan. The rights-of-way, and possibly the improvements themselves, would be obtained through the special permit process as property owners seek Planning Board approvals. Each infrastructure element serves a different function: East-west main roadway to improve circulation within the Quadrangle, allow direct travel from Alewife Brook Parkway into the Quadrangle, and enhance property value, particularly for parcels away from Concord Avenue, by creating a sense of address.

Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge to improve the critical connection between Alewife Station and the Quadrangle, thereby increasing the number of people who could get to and from the Concord-Alewife area through means other than automobiles.

Stormwater Park to be located at the low point in the Quadrangle, to create an areawide stormwater management feature that would also serve as a passive park.

Proposal

- Reference the Infrastructure Plans (see attached Priority and Additional Infrastructure Plans) in the special permit criteria, for the Planning Board to consider the consistency of a project with these plans during their review of special permit applications for development proposed in the Concord-Alewife area.

- Provide incentives to create these infrastructure elements, using FAR bonuses that may be granted by the Planning Board as follows:
 - i. For conveying a needed right-of-way to the City, in fee or an easement, for a segment of a roadway, pedestrian path, public open space or other publicly accessible recreation feature, a density bonus that doubles the gross floor area otherwise permitted on the area conveyed.
 - ii. For constructing, or facilitating the construction of, a pedestrian/bicycle bridge over the railroad tracks, an FAR bonus of 0.25 for the entire lot.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT TREATMENT

Due to the proximity of the Concord-Alewife area to important water resources and due to flooding concerns, managing the quality and quantity of water, and the rate at which it is discharged into the municipal sewer system became a theme for the study. The area is largely covered with impervious surfaces, which exacerbate water runoff. Thus, redevelopment represents the best opportunity to increase permeability by removing some of the paving and address these stormwater goals.

Proposal

- Increase the minimum open space requirement for all uses to 15%.
- Create a permeability requirement of 25%. The same portion of a lot may meet both the open space and permeability requirements.
- By special permit, the Planning Board may modify open space and permeability requirements and permit the pooling of open space and permeable area requirements for one lot on other adjacent or non-contiguous lots.
- Create guidelines that encourage the use of Low Impact Development techniques to address stormwater goals.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Design guidelines are proposed to provide a framework for development to improve the appearance and cohesiveness of the Concord-Alewife area. The guidelines also bring together various aspects of the study recommendations such as transportation, stormwater management and streetscape improvements. In general, the guidelines encourage the following:

- an architecturally diverse district;
- low Impact Development principles in building and site design;
- breaking up of large blocks into smaller blocks to improve circulation;
- site design to preserve right-of-way for future infrastructure;
- active uses at the street level;
- parking below grade where possible;
- streetscape improvements;
- links to open space resources; and
- pedestrian and bicycle connections to adjacent areas.



Concord-Alewife Planning Study

City of Cambridge

Goody, Clancy & Associates

ANALYST: NATHAN SHULTZ
 STREET: NATHAN SHULTZ & ASSOCIATES
 ENVIRONMENT: PUBLISHED SOURCE: 2009

Concord-Alewife Planning Study
Priority Infrastructure Plan
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Alewife Brook Reservation

Alewife
T Station and
Parking Garage

Blair
Pond

Rafferty
Park

Danehy
Park

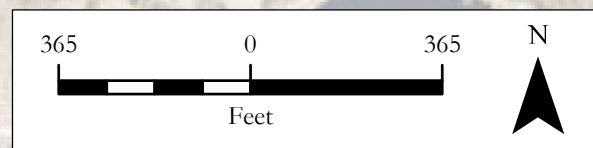
Fresh Pond

Proposed

- Priority Main Road
- Pedestrian Bridge
- Potential Stormwater Open Space

Existing

- Existing Roadway
- Existing Ped/Bike Connections



Orthophotographs taken April 4, 2003.
Actual road edges are not shown; instead,
all roadways are depicted as 60 feet wide.

Concord-Alewife Planning Study
Additional Infrastructure Plan

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Alewife Brook Reservation

Alewife
T Station and
Parking Garage

Blair
Pond

Rafferty
Park

Danehy
Park

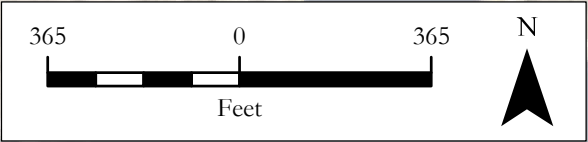
Fresh Pond

Proposed

- Alternative Right-of-Way
- Other Proposed Roads
- Proposed Road Realignment
- Proposed Ped/Bike Connections
- Potential Commuter Rail Station

Existing

- Existing Roadway
- Existing Ped/Bike Connections



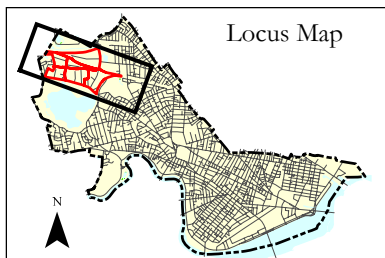
Orthophotographs taken April 4, 2003.
Actual road edges are not shown; instead,
all roadways are depicted as 60 feet wide.

Concord-Alewife Existing and Proposed Zoning

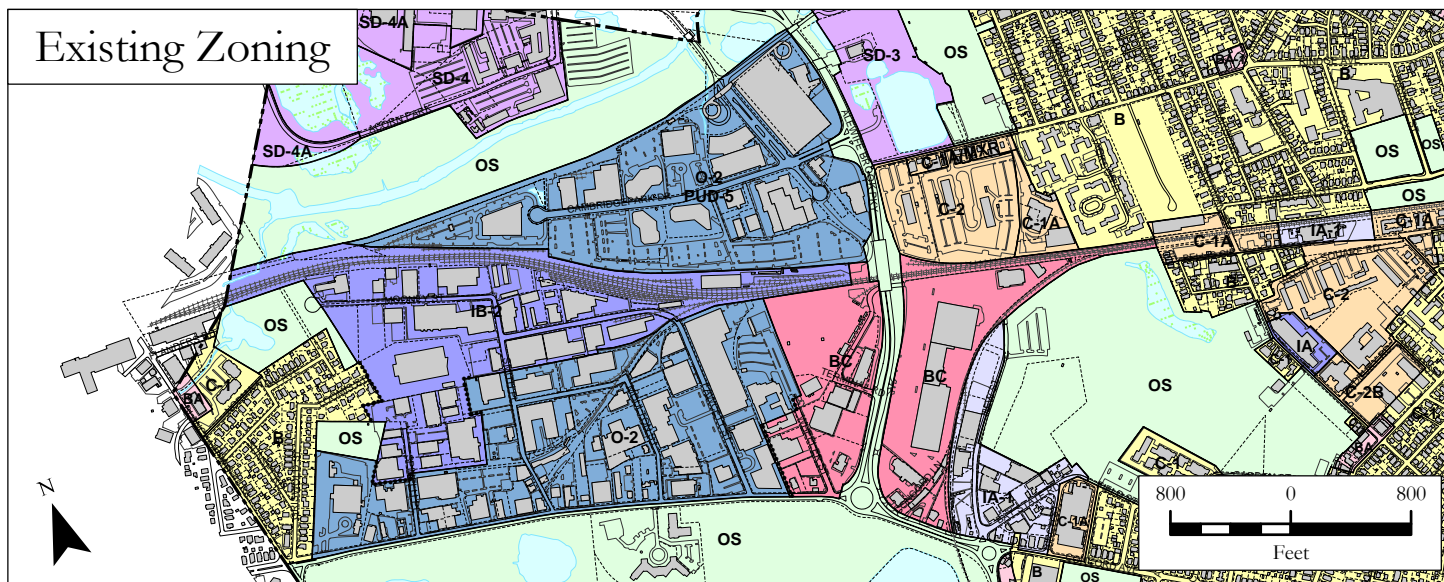
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Zoning Districts

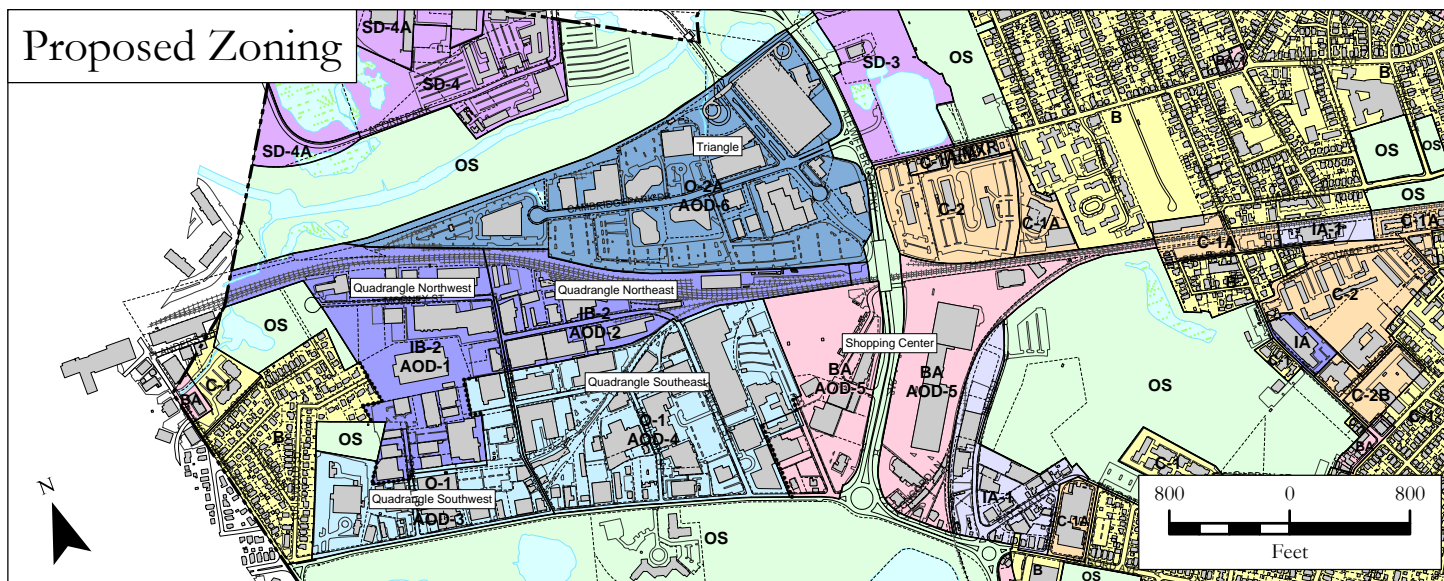
B	Residence B
C-1	Residence C-1
C-1A	Residence C-1A
C-2	Residence C-2
C-2B	Residence C-2B
O-1	Office-1
O-2	Office-2
O-2A	Office-2A
BA	Business A
BA-1	Business A-1
BC	Business C
IA-1	Industry A-1
IA	Industry A
IB-2	Industry B-2
AOD	Alewife Overlay District
PUD	Planned Unit Development Overlay
MXR	Mixed Use Residential Overlay
SD-3	Special District-3
SD-4	Special District-4
SD-4A	Special District-4A
OS	Open Space



Existing Zoning



Proposed Zoning



CONCORD-ALEWIFE PLANNING STUDY -- COMPARISON OF EXISTING AND PROPOSED ZONING

AREA	EXISTING					PROPOSED				
	ZONING DIST	USE		BASE	SPL PERMIT	ZONING DIST	USE		BASE	SPECIAL PERMIT
QUADRANGLE NORTHWEST	IB-2	Res	FAR	1.5	Same	IB-2 (mod)/ AOD 1	Res	FAR	0.75	1.5
			Height	85'	Same			Height	35	65' (35 – 45' near Highlands)
		Comm	FAR	1.5	Same		Comm	FAR	0.75	1
			Height	85'	Same			Height	35	55' (35 – 45' near Highlands)
QUADRANGLE NORTHEAST	IB-2	Res	FAR	1.5	Same	IB-2 (mod)/ AOD 2	Res	FAR	0.75	1.5
			Height	85'	Same			Height	35'	70-85' (105' w TDR)
		Comm	FAR	1.5	Same		Comm	FAR	0.75	1.25
			Height	85'	Same			Height	35'	70' (85' w TDR)
QUADRANGLE SOUTHWEST	O-2	Res	FAR	2	Same	O-1/ AOD 3	Res	FAR	0.75	2
			Height	85'	Same			Height	35'	65' (35 – 45' near Highlands)
		Comm	FAR	1.5	Same		Comm	FAR	0.75	1
			Height	35-70'	35-85			Height	35'	55' (35 – 45' near Highlands)
QUADRANGLE SOUTHEAST	O-2	Res	FAR	2	Same	O-1/ AOD 4	Res	FAR	0.75	2
			Height	85'	Same			Height	35-75'	85' (105' w TDR)
		Comm	FAR	1.5	Same		Comm	FAR	0.75	1
			Height	35-70'	35-70			Height	35-70'	70' (85' w TDR)
SHOPPING CENTER	BC	Res	FAR	2	Same	BA / AOD 5	Res	FAR	1.75	2
			Height	55'	Same			Height	45'	55 - 85' (105' w TDR)
		Comm	FAR	1.25	Same		Comm	FAR	1	1.25
			Height	55'	Same			Height	35'	55 - 70' (85' w TDR)
TRIANGLE	O- 2/ PUD-5	Res	FAR	2	Same	O-2A/ AOD 6	Res	FAR	1.5	2
			Height	85'	Same			Height	70'	85-105' (125' w TDR)
		Comm	FAR	1.5	1.75		Comm	FAR	1.25	1.75
			Height	70'	85			Height	60'	85' (105' w TDR)

A. QUADRANGLE

Purpose

The western part of the Quadrangle is immediately adjacent to the residential Cambridge Highlands neighborhood and so should afford an appropriate transition in density, height, and use. The proposed zoning shifts density and height away from the Highlands toward areas with better transit access. Another goal of the zoning in the Quadrangle is to encourage a mix of uses, and residential in particular, to create a vibrant community that is visually attractive. Finally, because of the fragmented ownership pattern in the Quadrangle, coordinated development is encouraged.

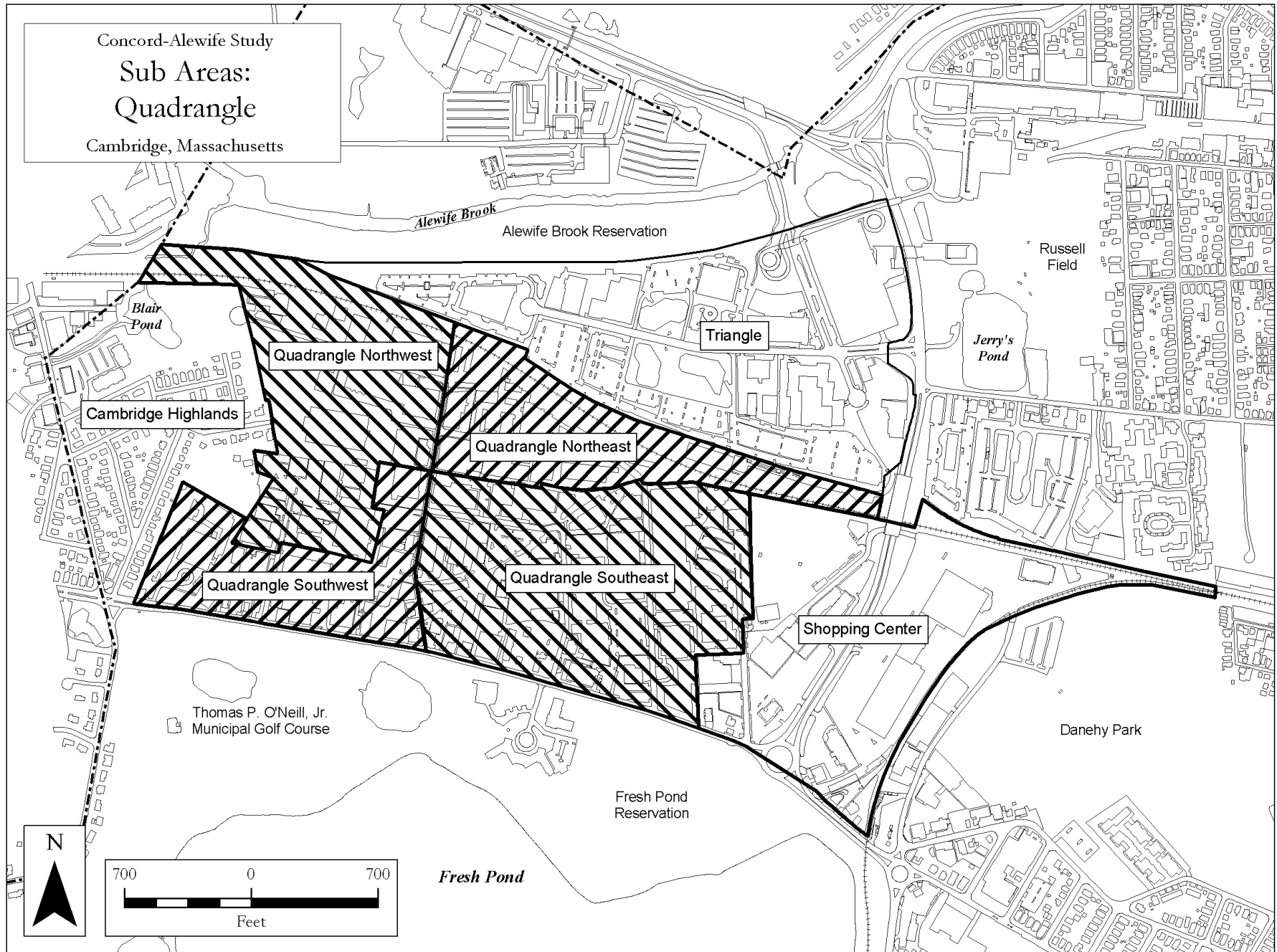
Proposal

Zoning changes proposed for the Quadrangle are summarized in the table below.

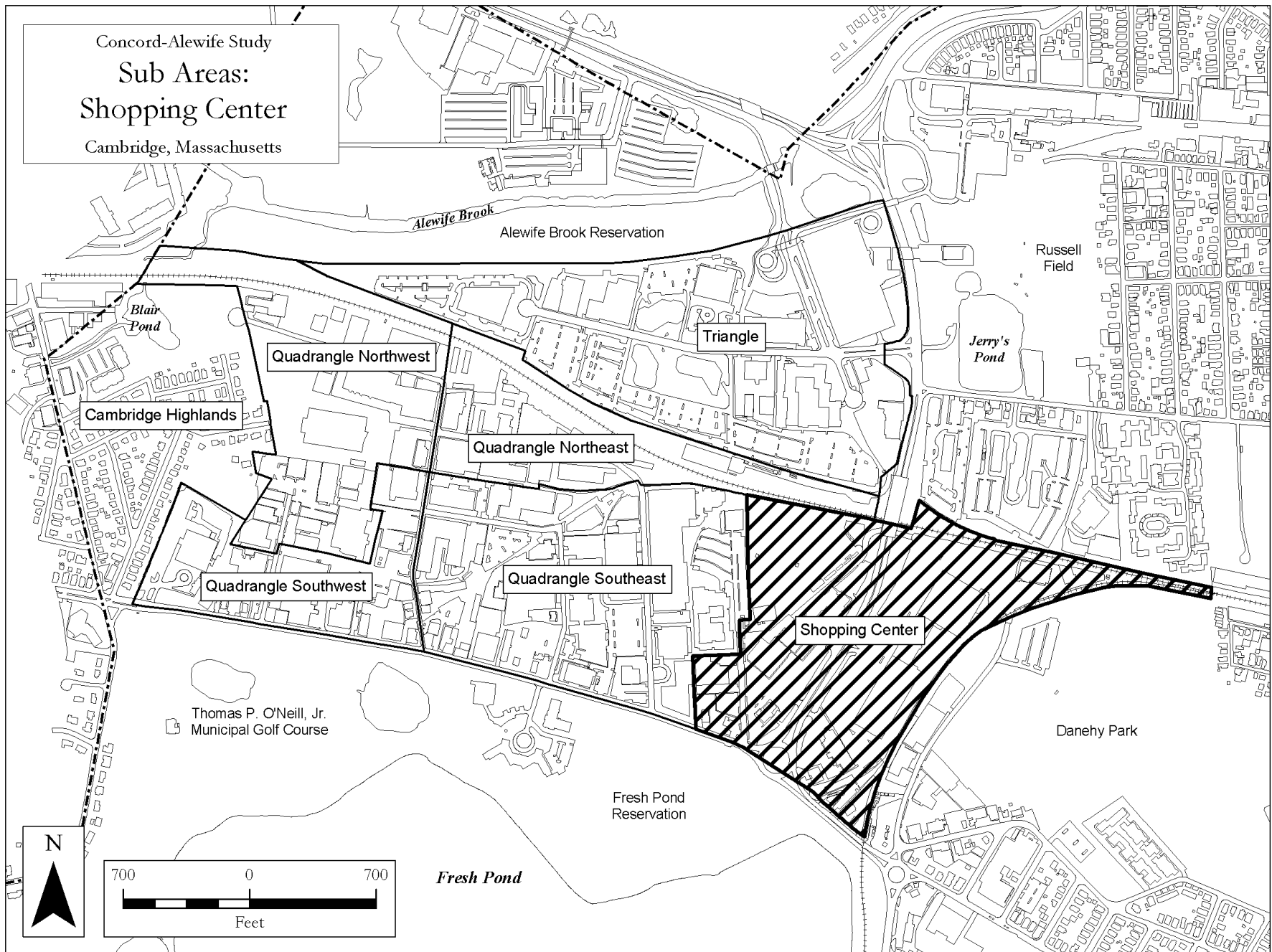
EXISTING					PROPOSED				
Zoning District			Base	Special Permit	Zoning District			Base	Special Permit
QUADRANGLE NORTHWEST									
IB-2	Res	FAR	1.50	Same	IB-2 (modified) /AOD 1	Res	FAR	0.75	1.50
		Height	85	Same			Height	35	65 (35 within 100' of Highlands)
	Comm	FAR	1.50	Same		Comm	FAR	0.75	1.0
		Height	85	Same			Height	35	55 (35 within 100' of Highlands)
QUADRANGLE NORTHEAST									
IB-2	Res	FAR	1.50	Same	IB-2 (modified) /AOD 2	Res	FAR	0.75	1.50
		Height	85	Same			Height	35	70-85
	Comm	FAR	1.50	Same		Comm	FAR	0.75	1.25
		Height	85	Same			Height	35	70
QUADRANGLE SOUTHWEST									
Office 2	Res	FAR	2.0	Same	Office 1 /AOD 3	Res	FAR	0.75	2.0
		Height	85	Same			Height	35	65 (35 within 100' of Highlands)
	Comm	FAR	1.50	Same		Comm	FAR	0.75	1.0
		Height	35-70	35-85			Height	35	55
QUADRANGLE SOUTHEAST									
Office 2	Res	FAR	2.0	Same	Office 1 /AOD 4	Res	FAR	0.75	2.0
		Height	85	Same			Height	35-75	85
	Comm	FAR	1.50	Same		Comm	FAR	0.75	1.0
		Height	35-70	35-70			Height	35-70	70

The zoning proposal for the Quadrangle also includes the following:

- Establishes base districts that lower FARs and heights for as-of-right development from current zoning. Rezones the area currently designated Office-2 to Office-1. Modifies the Industry B-2 district to reduce the height and FAR permitted as-of-right.
- Creates four overlay districts that, by special permit, allow higher FAR and height and greater flexibility in meeting setbacks, parking, and permeability requirements.
- Encourages lower density and heights near the Highlands and permits greater height and FAR in areas closer to the Alewife T station.
- Encourages residential development by allowing greater FAR for residential than commercial development.
- Establishes height transitions adjacent to Cambridge Highlands and Open Space districts.
- Requires the creation of a 25 foot wide vegetated buffer adjacent to Cambridge Highlands.
- Encourages infrastructure improvements by allowing FAR bonuses for that portion of land devoted to new roadway segment and significant open space.
- Maintains the Parkway Overlay District restrictions along Concord Avenue.
- Creates floorplate limits for portions of buildings over 70 feet in the Quadrangle Northeast and above 85 feet in the Quadrangle Southeast.
 - In the Quadrangle Northeast, sections of buildings taller than 70 feet may have a maximum floorplate of 10,000 sq. ft. and sections taller than 85 feet may have a maximum floorplate of 6,000 feet. All portions of buildings over 50 feet must be separated by at least 50 feet from other sections above 70 feet.
 - In the Quadrangle Southeast, sections of buildings taller than 85 feet may have a maximum floorplate of 10,000 sq. ft. and must be separated by at least 50 feet from other sections above 85 feet.



Map prepared by Brendan Monroe on April 14, 2005. CDD GIS d:\projects\ConcordAlewife\AreaLocusQuad.mxd



Map prepared by Brendan Monroe on April 14, 2005. CDD GIS d:\projects\ConcordAlewifeArea\LocusSC.mxd

B. SHOPPING CENTER

Purpose

Shopping Center Overlay District zoning recommendations reflect a desire for a mix of uses including destination and neighborhood retail and new residential development in particular that would enliven the area.

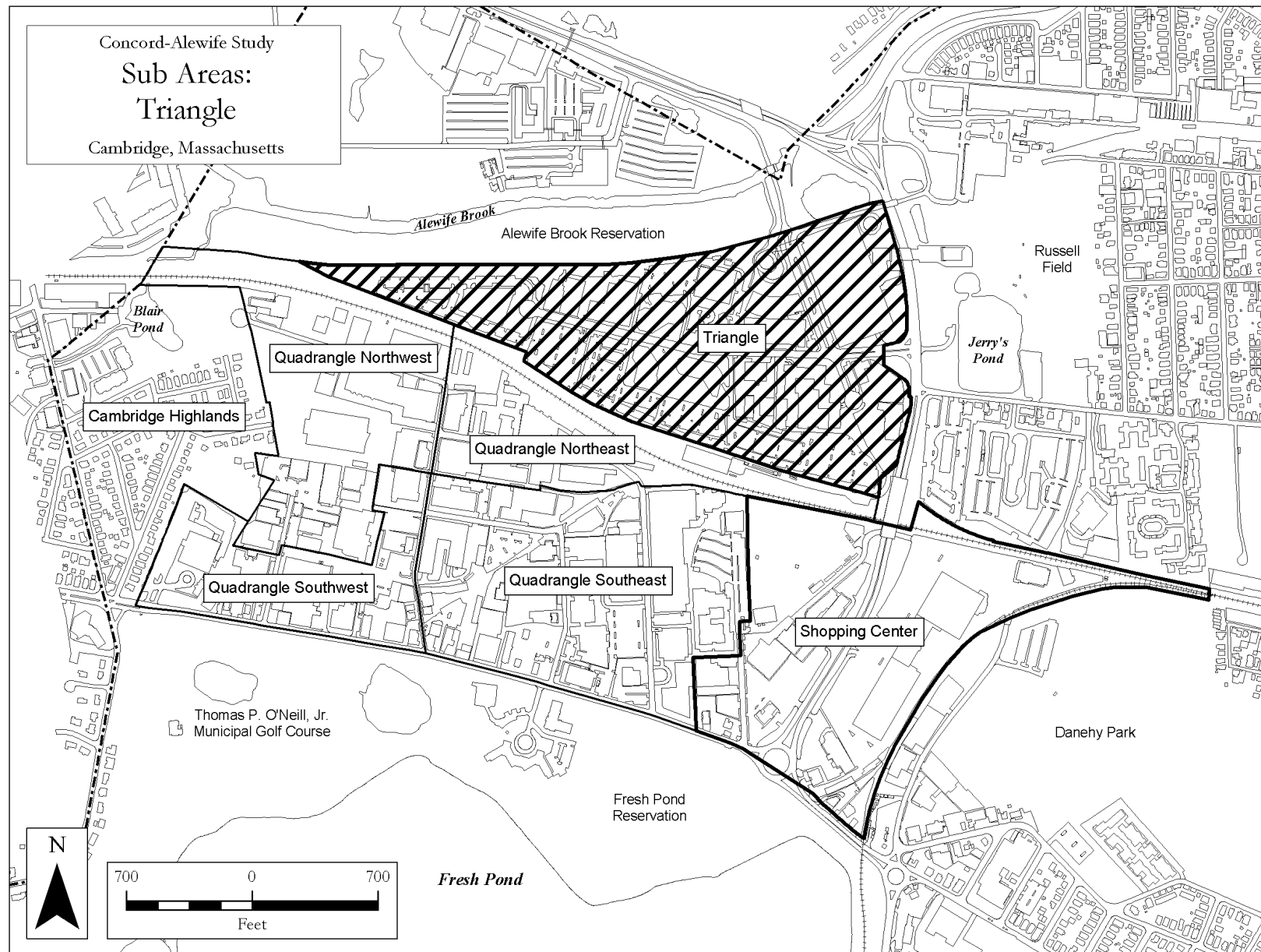
Proposal

Zoning changes proposed for the Shopping Center are summarized in the table below.

EXISTING					PROPOSED				
Zoning District			Base	Special Permit	Zoning District			Base	Special Permit
Bus - C	Res	FAR	2.0	Same	Bus – A/ AOD 5	Res	FAR	1.75	2.0
		Height	55	Same			Height	45	85
	Comm	FAR	1.25	Same		Comm	FAR	1.0	1.25
		Height	55	Same			Height	35	70

The zoning proposal for the Shopping Center also includes the following:

- Changes district designation from Business C to Business A and creates an overlay district, Alewife Overlay District 5.
- Limits non-residential use to 50% or less of development on a parcel.
- Encourages infrastructure improvements by allowing FAR bonuses for that portion of land devoted to new roadway segments.
- Creates floorplate limits for portions of buildings over 55'.
 - Sections of non-residential buildings taller than 55 feet may have a maximum floorplate of 15,000 sq. ft. and must be separated by at least 50 feet from other sections above 55 feet.
 - Sections of residential buildings taller than 55 feet may have a maximum floorplate of 10,000 sq. ft. and sections taller than 85 feet may have a maximum floorplate of 6,000 feet. All portions of buildings over 50 feet must be separated by at least 50 feet from other sections above 85 feet.
- Supports the development of structured parking.
- Maintains the Parkway Overlay District restrictions along Concord Avenue and Alewife Brook Parkway.



C. TRIANGLE

Purpose

The Triangle offers the best opportunity for increased transit-oriented development, particularly for residential uses close to the T. For commercial development, first floor retail is encouraged to enliven the streetscape and create a walkable environment along Cambridge Park Drive.

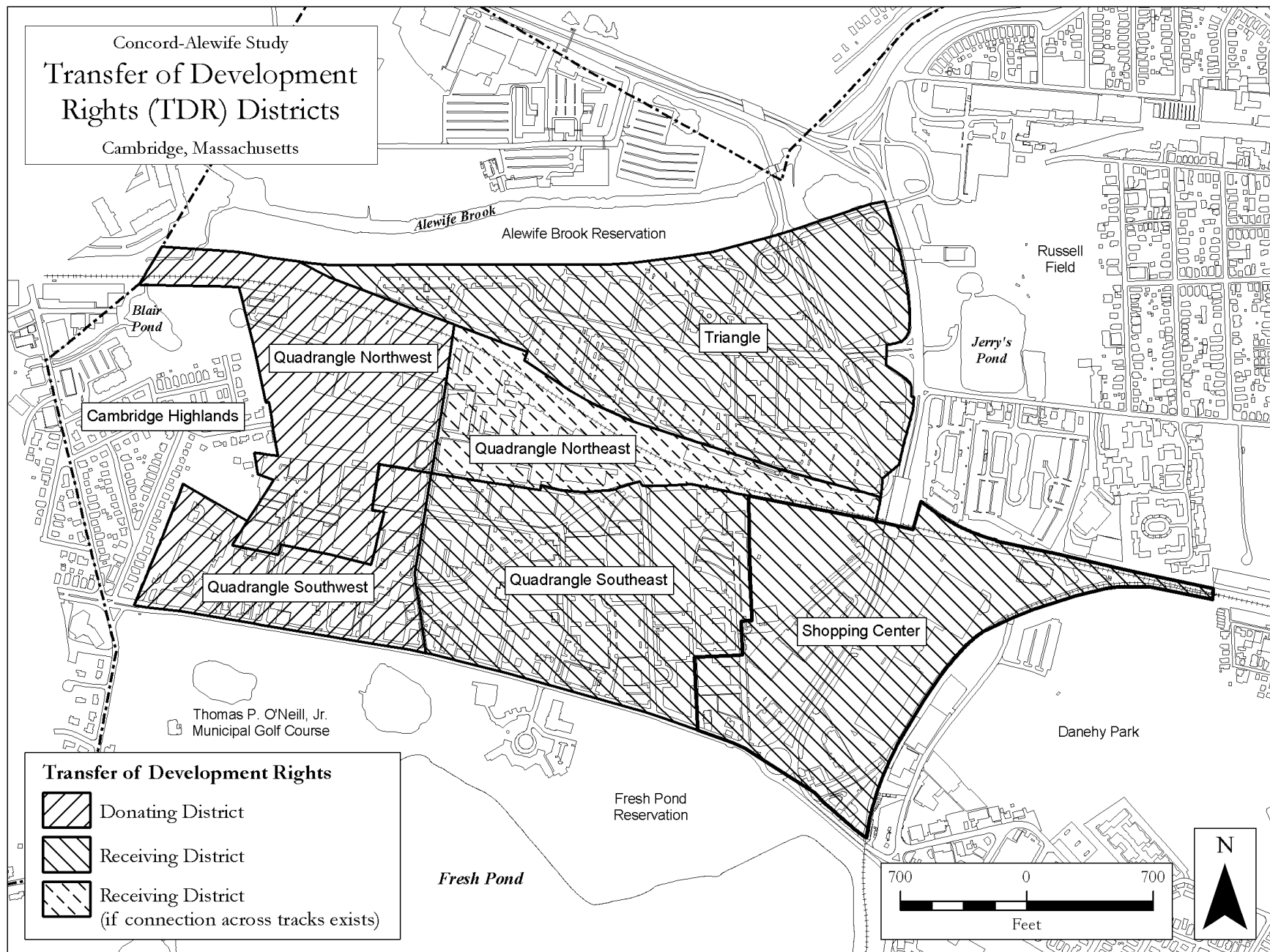
Proposal

Zoning changes proposed for the Triangle are summarized in the table below.

EXISTING					PROPOSED				
Zoning District			Base	Special Permit	Zoning District			Base	Special Permit
Office 2/ PUD 5	Res	FAR	2.0	Same	Office 2A/ AOD 6	Res	FAR	1.50	2.0
		Height	85	Same			Height	70	105
	Comm	FAR	1.50	1.75		Comm	FAR	1.25	1.75
		Height	70	85			Height	60	85

The zoning proposal for the Triangle also includes the following:

- Changes district designation from Office 2 to Office 2A and replaces the PUD 5 with the new overlay district, Alewife Overlay District 6.
- Supports the development of underground structured parking to consolidate parking, increase permeability, and create areas for positive redevelopment.
- Allows retail uses on the ground floor up to 10% of the gross floor area and limits each establishment to 10,000 sq. ft. or less.
- Encourages infrastructure improvements by allowing FAR bonuses for transferring the right-of-way of new roadway segments to the City and for facilitating the creation of a pedestrian/bicycle connection across the railroad tracks, linking the Triangle and Quadrangle.
- Creates floorplate limits for portions of buildings over 85'. Sections of residential buildings taller than 85 feet may have a maximum floorplate of 10,000 sq. ft. and sections over 105 feet may have a maximum floorplate of 6,000 feet. All portions of buildings over 85 feet must be separated by at least 50 feet from other sections above 85 feet.
- Maintains the Parkway Overlay District restrictions along Alewife Brook Parkway.



Map prepared by Brendan Monroe on April 14, 2005. CDD GIS d:\projects\ConcordAlewife\TDRDistricts.mxd

D. TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

Purpose

The Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) provision is intended to facilitate reduced density and traffic generation close to existing residential neighborhoods, while moving some of the potential commercial and mixed-use development to areas of Concord-Alewife that are closer to transit.

Proposal

- Allows transfer of development rights by special permit from the Planning Board. This requires review of and public comment on the proposed use of the development rights on both the donating and the receiving site.
- Encourages transfer of development rights from overlay districts close to Cambridge Highlands (AOD 1 and AOD 3) to overlay districts close to Alewife Station (AOD 4, AOD 5, and AOD 6). Transfer to AOD 2 will be permitted if a direct connection is established between this area and the Triangle.
- Permits transfer of development rights within an overlay district.
- Permits a donating lot to be used for residential, public park, or technical office for research and development after a transfer of development rights.
- Permits additional height on the receiving lot (15 - 25 feet, depending on location and use) to accommodate transferred square footage when development rights are transferred from AOD 1 and 2 to any of the remaining overlay districts.
- Creates a new Article 21.000 in the Zoning Ordinance to consolidate existing TDR provisions (for East Cambridge and Cambridgeport) with the proposed provisions for the Alewife area and would establish general procedural standards and regulations applicable to all TDR provisions.

E. CONCORD-ALEWIFE DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Concord-Alewife Design Guidelines are intended to inform property owners, business owners, developers, and the general public about the desired form and character of development in the Concord-Alewife Study Area. They will guide development activities in this area. The aim is to create consistently high-quality public environments, and to ensure that development contributes to the character and vitality of the surrounding community. The guidelines are based on the following core principles:

- Manage development to maintain livability in residential neighborhoods and ensure compatibility with existing neighborhood character.
- Provide better transitions between developing areas and existing residential neighborhoods.
- Create new mixed-use neighborhoods in the Quadrangle, Triangle, and Shopping Center.
- Enhance quality of life through the creation of active streets, new public open spaces, and improve connections to existing and future resources.
- Strengthen pedestrian and bicycle connections throughout Concord-Alewife.
- Enhance the environment and address stormwater management through the use of Low Impact Development principles.

The Concord-Alewife Design Guidelines will be referenced by the Planning Board in their review of special permit applications for projects in the Study Area. These guidelines will be specifically referenced in the City's zoning ordinance in the Project Review Special Permit section and in the overlay district text where applicable. Therefore, they will serve as a guide to developers for projects in the Concord-Alewife study area that require a special permit under the overlay district or under Article 19, Project Review, among other discretionary permits.

